

# PROJECT CENSORED

## THE MOST UNDERCOVERED NEWS IN THE USA

*Largely sidelined by the mainstream media, the most important news stories of the year, as judged by the Project Censored team, have a strong emphasis on US government and corporate authoritarianism at home and abroad.*

Each year, the Project Censored team from Sonoma State University, California, selects and evaluates thousands of published news stories by journalists working in the national and international mainstream as well as alternative press. Students, faculty staff and community experts participate in this process, which ultimately decides on the top 25 stories that were the most under-reported by the mainstream US media. Following is an edited summary of Project Censored's selection for 2002–2003. To see the full report plus references and updates, visit <http://www.projectcensored.org/publications/2004/>. See the Book Reviews section this issue for our review of *Censored 2004*. — Editor

### 1. The Neoconservative Plan for Global Dominance

Over the last year, the US corporate media have made much of Saddam Hussein and his stockpile of weapons of mass destruction. Rarely did the media, especially television, address the possibility that larger strategies might also have driven the decision to invade Iraq. Broad political strategies regarding foreign policy do indeed exist and are part of the public record.

In the 1970s, the United States and the Middle East were embroiled in a tug-of-war over oil. At the time, American military presence in the Gulf was fairly insignificant and the prospect of seizing control of Arab oilfields by force was pretty unattainable. Still, the idea of this level of dominance was very attractive to a group of hardline, pro-military Washington insiders that included both Democrats and Republicans. Eventually labelled "neoconservatives", this circle of influential strategists played important roles in the Defense departments of Presidents Ford, Reagan and Bush, Sr, and at conservative think-tanks throughout the 1980s and 1990s. Today, members of this circle occupy several key posts in the White House, Pentagon and State Department. Most principal among them are:

- Dick Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld, the current Vice-President and Defense Secretary respectively, who have been closely aligned since they served with the Ford Administration in the 1970s;
- Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz, the key architect of the post-war reconstruction of Iraq;
- Richard Perle, past Chairman and still member of the Pentagon's Defense Policy Board which has great influence over foreign military policies;
- William Kristol, Editor of the *Weekly Standard* and founder of the powerful neo-conservative think-tank, Project for a New American Century.

Since the first Gulf War the US has built a network of military bases, now almost completely encircling the oil fields of the Persian Gulf. In 1989, following the end of the Cold War and just prior to the Gulf War, Dick Cheney, Colin Powell and Paul Wolfowitz produced the "Defense Planning Guidance" report, advocating US military dominance around the globe. The plan called for the United States to maintain and grow in military superiority and prevent new rivals from rising up to challenge it on the world stage. Using words like "pre-emptive" and "military forward presence", the plan called for the US to be dominant over friends and foes alike. It concluded with the assertion that the US can best attain this position by making itself "absolutely powerful".

For months leading up to the war against Iraq, it was widely assumed among critics of the impending war that a hidden motive for military action was Iraq's oil, not terrorism or weapons of mass destruction. In fact, "No Blood for Oil" became perhaps the leading

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slogan and bumper sticker of the peace movement.

Since the end of this war, it has become clear that the United States and the UK have aggressively sought to maintain direct control over Iraq's oil industry. When looters devastated Baghdad, only the Ministry of Oil was left unscathed since it was protected by US Marines.

Since then, hand-picked Iraqi officials have been installed in the ministry, under the supervision of US military and civilian officials, and there is movement towards privatisation of Iraq's oil industry, with France, Russia and China likely to be excluded from rebuilding the industry or securing contracts for future Iraqi oil delivery.

## 2. Homeland Security Threatens Civil Liberties

As reported widely in the mainstream press, the new US Department of Homeland Security (DHS) represents the most extensive restructuring of the US government since 1947—the year the Department of War was combined with the Army, Navy, Marines, Coast Guard and Air Force to create the Department of Defense (DOD). The Department of Homeland Security combines over 100 separate entities of the Executive Branch, including the Secret Service, the Coast Guard and the Border Patrol, among others. The DHS employs over 170,000 federal workers and commands a total annual budget of US\$37 billion.

One DHS mandate largely ignored by the press requires the FBI, CIA and state and local governments to share intelligence reports with the department upon command, without explanation. According to the American Civil Liberties Union, the Department of Homeland Security will be "100% secret and 0% accountable".

Meanwhile, the gathering, retention and use of information collected is a central focus of the Bush Administration's new agenda. Officially established to track down terrorists, the DHS can collect information on any dissenter, American citizen or not, violent or not. The classification of recent peace marches and protests as "terrorist events" within DOD and FEMA documents is one example of the dangerous potential of these mandates.

The USA Patriot Act of 2001 allows the government increased and unprecedented access to the lives of American citizens and represents an unrestrained imposition on civil liberties.

William Safire, a writer for the *New York Times*, defined the first Patriot Act as a Presidential effort to seize dictatorial control. No member of Congress was given sufficient time to study the first Patriot Act that was passed by the House on October 27, 2001. In some cases, while driving the Act through Congress, Vice-President Cheney would not allow the legislation to be read, and he publicly threatened members of Congress that they would be blamed for the next terrorist attack if they did not vote for the Patriot Act.

The *Domestic Security Enhancement Act of 2003* (aka Patriot Act II) poses even greater hazards to civil liberties. The draft proposal of Patriot Act II was leaked by Attorney-General John

Ashcroft's staff in February 2003 and is stamped "Confidential—Not for Distribution". Patriot Act II was widely editorialised against in the US media, but full disclosure on the contents, implications and motivations was underdeveloped. In particular, the Patriot Act II proposes to place the entire Federal government and many areas of State government under the exclusive jurisdiction of the Department of Justice, the Department of Homeland Security and the FEMA NorthCom military command.

## 3. US Illegally Removes Pages from Iraq's UN Report

Throughout the winter of 2002, the Bush Administration publicly accused Iraqi weapons declarations of being incomplete. The almost unbelievable reality of this situation is that it was the United States itself that had removed over 8,000 pages of the 11,800-page original report.

This came as no surprise to Europeans, however, as Iraq had made extra copies of the complete weapons declaration report and unofficially distributed them to journalists throughout Europe. The Berlin newspaper *Die Tageszeitung* broke the story on December 19, 2002, in an article by Andreas Zumach.

At the same time, according to the investigation by Michael Niman, the Iraqi government sent out official copies of the report on November 3, 2002. One, classified as "Secret", was sent to the International Atomic Energy Agency, and another copy went to the UN Security Council.

The US convinced Colombia, chair of the Security Council and current target of US military occupation and financial aid, to look the other way while the report was removed, edited and returned. Other members of the Security Council, such as Britain, France, China and Russia, were implicated in the missing pages as well (China and Russia were still arming Iraq) and had little desire to expose the USA's transgression. So all members accepted the new, abbreviated version.

But what was in the missing pages that the Bush Administration felt was so threatening that they had to be removed? What information were

Europeans privy to that Americans were not?

According to Niman, "The missing pages implicated twenty-four US-based corporations and the successive Ronald Reagan and George Bush, Sr, administrations in connection with the illegal supplying of Saddam Hussein's government with myriad weapons of mass destruction and the training to use them".

Corporations, agencies and laboratories documented in the original report as supporting Iraq's weapons programs prior to Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait include:

- Eastman Kodak, DuPont, Honeywell, Rockwell, Sperry, Hewlett-Packard and Bechtel;
- US government agencies such as the Department of Energy, Department of Agriculture and Department of Defense;
- Nuclear weapons laboratories such as Lawrence Livermore, Los Alamos and Sandia.

Beginning in 1983, the United States was involved in 80 shipments of chemical and biological components, including strains of

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botulism toxin, anthrax, gangrene bacteria, West Nile fever virus and Dengue fever virus. These shipments continued even after Iraq used chemical weapons against Iran in 1984. Later, in 1988, Iraq used chemical weapons against the Kurds.

But perhaps most importantly, the missing pages contain information that could make a case for war crimes charges being laid against officials within the Reagan and Bush, Sr, administrations—including the current Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld for his collaboration with Saddam Hussein leading up to the massacres of Iraqi Kurds and acting as liaison for US military aid during the war between Iraq and Iran.

#### 4. Rumsfeld's Plan to Provoke Terrorists

According to a classified document, "Special Operations and Joint Forces in Countering Terrorism", prepared for Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld by his Defense Science Board, a new organisation has been created to thwart potential terrorist attacks on the United States.

This counter-terror operations group—the "Proactive Preemptive Operations Group" (P2OG)—will require 100 people and at least US\$100 million a year. The team of covert counterintelligence agents will be responsible for secret missions designed to target terrorist leaders as well as "stimulate reactions" among terrorist groups, provoking them into committing violent acts which would then expose them to "counterattack" by US forces.

This means that the United States government is planning to use secret military operations in order to provoke murderous terrorist attacks on innocent people. In a strange twist of logic, it seems the plan is to somehow combat terrorism by causing it.

According to the report, other strategies include stealing money from terrorist cells or tricking them with fake communications. The Defense Department already maintains a secretive counter-terror operations group, known as Delta Force, that is called in when a crisis happens.

The current P2OG program is not entirely new to the United States. One similar program was Operation *Northwoods*. In 1963, America's top military brass presented a plan to President John F. Kennedy that called for a fake terrorist campaign—complete with bombings, hijackings, plane crashes and dead Americans—to provide "justification" for an invasion of Cuba, the Mafia/corporate fiefdom which had recently been lost to Castro.

#### 5. The Effort to Make Unions Disappear

For more than a quarter of a century, big business has engaged in a successful campaign of weakening unions, redistributing income away from the working class and writing business-friendly rules for the global economy. Yet the current political climate makes the last 25 years look like a golden era for workers' rights.

Called the "most pro-corporate President in history", George W. Bush has been engaged, particularly since 9-11, in a relentless yet largely covert effort to undermine labour unions and worker protections. In the wake of 9-11, the Bush administration used the spectre of national security to justify its attack on public-sector unions and to stall passage of the Homeland Security Bill until receiving the right to exempt the 180,000 employees of the new department from most civil-service protections.

Congress passed legislation that created the Transportation Security Authority (TSA), which oversees baggage screeners at airports and requires all baggage screeners to be Federal government employees. But since the TSA is part of the Homeland Security Department, employees may not form or join a union.

Congressional legislation also allows Homeland Security Director Tom Ridge to suspend civil service regulations, allow discrimination, abolish whistleblower protections and exempt the department from Freedom of Information Act regulations.

The House has passed legislation that also exempts the Homeland Security Department from Title 5 of the Civil Service Act, which protects the collective bargaining rights of Federal employees.

#### 6. Closing Access to Information Technology

Technological changes, coupled with deregulation, may soon radically limit diversity on the Internet. The 7,000 Internet Service Providers (ISPs) that remain in the US today are quickly dwindling to just two or three for any one locale. They are being bought out by large monopolies that also control your local phone and cable and possibly Internet satellite.

Such degree of market control spells trouble for freedom of information on the Internet. Cable and phone monopolies would become clearinghouses for information. Corporations and government agencies will hold tremendous power to filter and censor content. ISPs already have the capability to "privilege", or block out, content travelling through their web servers. With the demise of open access regulations, Internet content will likely resemble the "monotonous diet of corporate content"

that viewers now receive with cable television.

The monopoly power being handed over to the cable and phone companies will enable them to sell different levels of Internet access, much like they do with cable television. For one price, you could access only certain pre-approved sites; for a higher price, you could access a wider selection of sites; and only for the highest price could you access the entire World Wide Web. This is already the way that many wireless Internet packages operate.

It's clear that "marginal" content that isn't associated with e-commerce, big business or government would have a hard time making it into the first-tier, "basic" packages. This isn't censorship, we'll be told. It's just that there is only so much bandwidth to go around, and customers would rather see CNN, the Disney Channel and porn than community-based websites such as Indymedia.org.

#### 7. Treaty Busting by the USA

The United States is a signatory to nine multilateral treaties that it has either blatantly violated or gradually subverted. The Bush Administration is now outright rejecting a number of those treaties, and in doing so places global security in jeopardy as other nations feel entitled to do the same.

The rejected treaties include: the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), the Treaty Banning Antipersonnel Mines, the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC), a protocol to create a compliance regime for the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC), the Kyoto Protocol on global warming, and the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty. The US is also not complying with the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), the Chemical

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Weapons Commission (CWC), the BWC and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.

The 20th century was the bloodiest in human history, with a total of 174 million people killed in genocide and war. The world increasingly needs an international legal framework which can protect the people of the world from heinous criminal acts such as genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity. This reasoning explains the votes of the 139 countries that signed the Rome Treaty and the 67 ratifications that have resulted in the establishment of the ICC.

Former US President Bill Clinton signed the Rome Treaty supporting the International Criminal Court when he held office. However, in an unprecedented action, George W. Bush actually erased Clinton's signature (a US President has never before "unsigned" a treaty). Moreover, his administration has declared it has no intention whatsoever of cooperating with the ICC.

### **8. American and British Forces Continue Use of Depleted Uranium Weapons Despite Massive Evidence of Negative Health Effects**

American and British coalition forces are using depleted uranium (DU) shells in the war against Iraq and deliberately flouting a UN resolution which classifies the munitions as illegal weapons of mass destruction.

Nobel Peace Prize candidate Dr Helen Caldicott states that the tiny radioactive particles created when a DU weapon hits a target are easily inhaled through gas masks. The particles, which lodge in the lungs, can be transferred to the kidneys and other vital organs. Gulf War veterans are excreting uranium in their urine and also in their semen, leading to chromosomal damage. DU has a half-life of 4.1 billion years. The negative effects found in one generation of US veterans could be the fate of all future generations of Iraqi people.

In addition to Dr Doug Rokke, the Pentagon's original expert on DU, ex-army nurse Carol Picou has been outspoken about the negative effects of DU on herself and other veterans. She has compiled extensive documentation on the birth defects found among the Iraqi people and the children of US Gulf War veterans. She was threatened in anonymous phone calls on the eve of her testimony to Congress. Subsequently, her car, in which she had left sensitive information on DU, was mysteriously destroyed.

### **9. Poverty, Women's Rights and Civil Disruption Worse Than Ever in Afghanistan**

While all eyes have been turned to Iraq, the people of Afghanistan have continued to suffer in silence in what is considered to be their worst poverty in decades. The promised democratic government is too concerned with assassination attempts to worry about the suffering of its people.

The Afghani people still have no new constitution, no new laws and little food. Ethnic and political rivalries plague the country and the military power of the warlords has increased. While the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF)—the 4,500-strong foreign peacekeeping unit—is assigned to defend only the capital, private armies of an estimated 700,000 men roam Afghanistan, continuing the traditional system of fiefdoms.

Despite the fanfare (stripping the burka; the signing of the "Declaration of Essential Rights of Afghan Women"), little has changed for the average Afghani woman. Many women have yet to stop wearing the burka due to fear of persecution, and the new Interior Ministry still requires women to receive permission from their male relatives before they travel.

As of July 2002, the life expectancy for the people of Afghanistan is 46 years. The average yearly income per capita is US\$280. As for the children, 90 per cent are not in school. After 23 years of war, the adult male population has been decimated and many children have taken the place of their fathers and mothers as the breadwinners in their families. Some scavenge for scrap metal, wood or bricks, while others hammer sheet metal, fill potholes or build coffins. They are lucky to earn five cents an hour. More than one out of every four children in Afghanistan will die before their fifth birthday. Beyond this, the region is just overcoming a three-year drought which killed half the crops and 80 per cent of livestock in some areas.

### **10. Africa Faces New Threat of Colonialism**

Today, Africa is the most war-torn continent in the world. Over the past 15 years, 32 of the 53 African countries experienced violent conflict. During the Cold War years (1950–1989), the US provided Africa with arms and training worth \$1.5 billion, thus setting the stage for the current round of conflicts. From 1991 to 1995, the US increased the amount of weapons and other military assistance to 50 of the total 53 African countries. Over the years, these US-funded wars have been responsible for the deaths of millions of Africans and the subsequent displacement, disease and starvation of many millions more.

In June 2002, leaders from the eight most powerful countries in the world (the G8) met to form a "New Partnership for Africa's Development" (NEPAD) as an "anti-poverty" campaign. One glaring omission, however, was the consultation and representation of the African nations: not one of the eight leaders was from Africa. The danger of the NEPAD proposal is that it fails to protect Africa from exploitation of its resources. NEPAD is akin to Plan Colombia in its attempt to employ Western development techniques to provide economic opportunities for international investment.

All over Africa, activists, trade unionists and women's organisations are mobilising against NEPAD. The objective of NEPAD will be to provide "increased aid to developing countries that embrace the required development model". The harrowing effects of International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank debt on the African continent will be neither addressed nor revoked by the new program. Under NEPAD, Africa's natural riches will continue to be bought and sold by the autonomous Western powers-that-be under the namesake of "development" and with the feigned support of the African people.

Loans provided by the IMF, World Bank and G8 have traditionally included strategies known as Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs), which came into effect in Africa in 1980. SAPs require that governments reduce public spending (especially on health, education and food/storage) in order to pay Western banks. They must also increase exports of raw materials to the West, encourage foreign investment and privatise state enterprises. Instead of

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reducing the debt, since 1980 SAPs have increased African debt by 500 per cent, creating a domino effect of disasters (prolonged famine, conflict, abject poverty, environmental exploitation) linked to an estimated 21 million deaths and, in the process, transferring hundreds of billion dollars to the West.

### 11. United States Implicated in Taliban Massacre

A documentary entitled *Massacre at Mazar*, released in 2002 by Scottish film producer Jamie Doran, implicates US troops in the torturing and deaths of approx. 3,000 men from Mazar-i-Sharif, Afghanistan.

Doran's documentary follows the finding of Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) that there is evidence for the disposal of human remains at two mass gravesites near Mazar-i-Sharif. In the documentary, two witnesses claim that they were forced to drive into the desert with hundreds of Taliban prisoners who were held in sealed cargo containers. The witnesses allege that the orders came from a local US commander. Prisoners who had not yet suffocated to death inside the vans were shot by Northern Alliance gunmen while 30 to 40 US soldiers stood watching.

Irfan Azgar Ali, a survivor of the trip, informed the London *Guardian* newspaper: "They crammed us into sealed shipping containers. We had no water for 20 hours. We banged on the side of the container. There was no air and it was very hot. There were 300 of us in my container. By the time we arrived in Sheberghan, only 10 of us were alive."

One Afghani truck driver, forced to drive the containers, said the prisoners began to beg for air. "Northern Alliance commanders told us to stop the trucks and we came down," he said. "After that, they shot into the containers to make air holes. Blood came pouring out. They were screaming inside." Another driver in the convoy estimated that an average of 150 to 160 people died in each container. When the containers were unlocked at Sheberghan, the bodies of the dead tumbled out.

Another witness stated that they observed a US soldier break an Afghani prisoner's neck and pour acid on others.

The filmmakers allege that, in addition to bodies of Taliban prisoners, thousands of Afghans, Pakistanis, Uzbeks, Chechens and Tajiks may also be buried there.

The film has been shown on television in 14 countries, and Doran was able to show the documentary to the Italian and German parliaments in December 2002. On January 15, 2003, he was also able to get the film shown to members of British Parliament. As a result, quietly, the United Nations has agreed to undertake an investigation into the incident.

### 12. Bush Administration Behind Failed Military Coup in Venezuela

The April 11, 2002, military coup in Venezuela was supported by the United States government. According to intelligence analyst Wayne Madsen, the CIA actively organised the coup. "The CIA provided Special Operations Group personnel, headed by a lieutenant-colonel on loan from the US Special Operations Command at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, to help organize the coup against Chavez," he said.

Since his 1998 election, President Hugo Chavez has increasingly

socialised the Venezuelan government. One of his most controversial moves was to nationalise Venezuela's oil company, PDVSA. Venezuela is the fourth-largest oil-producing nation and the third-largest oil provider to the US. With Venezuela the leader of OPEC, Chavez has encouraged lowering oil production to raise prices. He also changed a 60-year-old agreement with oil companies that raised royalties for Venezuela.

Chavez has irritated the US in many ways. He changed the Venezuelan Constitution in 1999, granting more land rights to the poor, who make up over half of the 24 million people in Venezuela. He refused to allow US planes to fly over Venezuela during their military activities in Colombia. President Chavez was also the first head of state to visit Saddam Hussein in Iraq since the imposition of embargoes in 1990.

Because of the close relationship that many of Venezuela's wealthy have with the United States, the coup took place with little opposition from Venezuela's long-established business and political community. The Bush Administration was quick to endorse the change in government, which put Pedro Carmona, a wealthy businessman and former business associate of George Bush, Sr, into office. Carmona's first move as President was to "dissolve the Constitution, national legislature, Supreme Court, Attorney-General's office and Comptroller's office".

In the United States, corporate press covered the coup from a sympathetic anti-Chavez perspective. Television stations in Venezuela refused to cover the anti-coup protests, choosing instead to run their regular program schedules. Five out of the six major networks are owned by a single owner, who supported US involvement in Venezuela. CIA Special Operations psychological warfare (PSYOPs) agents produced television announcements, purportedly by Venezuelan political and business leaders, saying Chavez "provoked" the crisis by ordering his supporters to fire on peaceful protesters in Caracas.

Despite the distorted media coverage in Venezuela, a huge anti-coup civil protest involving hundreds of thousands of people began. Several branches of the Venezuelan military joined the anti-coup forces. The streets of Caracas were flooded with protesters and soldiers vehemently chanting anti-Carmona slogans. Within two days, Carmona stepped down and Chavez returned to power.

### 13. Corporate Personhood Challenged

Since the founding of the USA, a debate has raged over the nature of corporations and whether they should be entitled to the same right to legal "personhood" as actual people. This idea of corporate personhood has recently come under scrutiny.

It was back in 1886 that a Supreme Court decision (*Santa Clara County v. Southern Pacific Railroad Company*) ostensibly led to corporate personhood and free speech rights, thereby guaranteeing protections under the First and Fourteenth Amendments.

However, according to author Thom Hartmann, the relatively mundane court case *never* actually granted these personhood rights to corporations. In fact, Chief Justice Morrison Waite wrote, "We avoided meeting the Constitutional question in the decision". Yet, when writing up the case summary—which has no legal status—the Court reporter, a former railroad president named J. C. Bancroft Davis, declared, "The defendant Corporations are persons

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within the intent of the clause in section 1 of the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States, which forbids a state to deny any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws". But the Court had made no such legal determination. It was the clerk's opinion and misrepresentation of the case in the headnote upon which current claims of corporate personhood and free speech entitlements now rest.

In 1978, however, the Supreme Court further entrenched the idea of corporate personhood by deciding that corporations were entitled to the free speech right to give money to political causes—thus linking free speech with financial clout.

But more recently, in December 2002, Porter township, Pennsylvania, unanimously passed an ordinance *denying* corporate claims to personhood. The township is the first and only local government in the United States to deny these civil and constitutional rights to corporations. Porter township and neighbouring Rush township have laws that govern the local dumping of Pittsburgh-generated sludge by charging the dumping companies a "tipping fee".

#### 14. Unwanted Refugees a Global Problem

In the last 10 years, the number of displaced people has exploded. Known as refugees, asylum seekers, illegal aliens or unauthorised economic migrants, many are the indigenous of their region and almost all are the poorest of the poor.

According to the 2002 World Refugee Survey, there are as many as 40 million displaced people throughout the world. Fifteen million are seeking asylum in other countries. In addition, there are at least 22 million "internally displaced" within their country of origin, who are not protected by international law and are therefore at even greater risk of oppression and abuse.

Often, the international response to terrorist acts is to blame the refugees, even when they themselves are the victims. The international community is unwilling to devote necessary resources to help resolve those conflicts, or at least to address fully the social and humanitarian issues.

#### 15. US Military's War on the Earth

The world's largest polluter, the US military, generates 750,000 tons of toxic waste material annually—more than the five largest chemical companies in the US combined. This pollution occurs globally as the US maintains bases in dozens of countries. In the US, there are 27,000 toxic hot spots on 8,500 military properties. Washington's Fairchild Air Force Base is the number one producer of hazardous waste, generating over 13 million pounds of waste in 1997. Not only is the military emitting toxic material directly into the air and water, it's poisoning the land of nearby communities, resulting in increased rates of cancer, kidney disease, birth defects, low birth weight and miscarriage.

The military currently manages 25 million acres of land, providing habitat for some 300 threatened or endangered species. Groups such as Defenders of Wildlife have sued the military for damage done to endangered animal populations by bomb tests. The testing of low-frequency sonar technology is accused of having played a role in the stranding deaths of whales around the world.

Rather than working to remedy these problems, the Pentagon claims that the burden of regulations is undercutting troop readiness. The Pentagon already operates military bases in and outside the US as "federal reservations", which fall outside normal regulation. Yet the Department of Defense is seeking further exemptions in Congress from the Migratory Bird Treaties Act, the Wildlife Act, the Endangered Species Act, the Clean Air Act and the National Environmental Policy Act.

#### 16. Plan Puebla–Panama and the FTAA

The Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) is a trade agreement intended to spread NAFTA's trade rules to an additional 31 Latin American nations by 2005. Working in conjunction with FTAA is Plan Puebla–Panama (PPP), a multibillion-dollar development plan in progress that would turn southern Mexico and all of Central America into a colossal free trade zone, competing in the worldwide race to drain wages, working conditions, environmental protection and human rights.

PPP is the brainchild of Mexican President and former Coca-Cola executive Vicente Fox. Fox set priorities when he first took office, stating, "My government is *by* entrepreneurs, *for* entrepreneurs". Not surprisingly, then, the PPP emerges not as a strategy to end the endemic poverty in this region but, rather, to induce private investment/colonisation as this turns over control of the area's vast natural resources—including water, oil, minerals, timber and ecological biodiversity—to the private sector, mostly multinational corporations.

There has been almost no coverage in the American press of the fact that nearly 10 million Brazilians voted against the FTAA in an informal plebiscite; that Americans, Argentinians, Ecuadorians, Mexicans and Uruguayans are engaged in similar processes of *consulta popular*, or people's referendum; and that national or regional Forums Against the FTAA have been held in Argentina, Bolivia, the Caribbean, Central America, Colombia and Ecuador.

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#### 17. Clear Channel Monopoly Draws Criticism

Clear Channel Communications of San Antonio, Texas, may not yet be a household name, but in the past seven years the radio station conglomerate has rocketed to a place alongside NBC and Gannett as one of the largest media companies in the United States.

Before passage of the Telecommunications Act of 1996, a company could not own more than 40 radio stations in the entire USA. With the Act's sweeping relaxation of ownership limits, the cap on radio ownership was eliminated. As a result, Clear Channel has dominated the industry by growing from 40 radio stations nationally in the mid-1990s to approximately 1,225 stations nationally by 2003. The station also dominates the audience share in 100 of 112 major markets.

In addition to its radio stations, Clear Channel also owns television station affiliates, billboards and outdoor advertising, and owns or exclusively books the vast majority of concert venues, amphitheatres and clubs in the country. According to *NOW with Bill Moyers*, in 2000 Clear Channel purchased the nation's largest concert and events promoter, and in 2001 Clear Channel did 70 per cent of national ticket sales.

## 18. Charter Forest Proposal Threatens Access to Public Land

The Bush administration's Charter Forest Proposal is an attempt to privatise and profit from public forestland. Under this proposal, public land management will be transferred from public hands to local, privately controlled oversight boards. The plan is the administration's attempt to further commodify and privatise the collective public domain of national forests by implementing ideas formulated by the American Recreation Coalition (ARC).

ARC represents resort developers and more than 100 motorised recreation industries. It touts the Walt Disney Corporation as its most prominent member. According to its own description, the ARC "strives to catalyze public/private partnerships for outdoor recreation opportunities".

## 19. US Dollar versus the Euro: Another Reason for the Invasion of Iraq

President Richard Nixon removed US currency from the gold standard in 1971. Since then, the world's supply of oil has been traded in US fiat dollars, making the dollar the dominant world reserve currency. Countries must provide the United States with goods and services for dollars—which the United States can freely print. To purchase energy and pay off any IMF debts, countries must hold vast dollar reserves. The world is attached to a currency that one country can produce at will. This means that—in addition to controlling world trade—the United States is importing substantial quantities of goods and services for very low relative costs.

The euro has begun to emerge as a serious threat to dollar hegemony and US economic dominance. The dollar may prevail throughout the Western Hemisphere, but the euro and dollar are clashing in the former Soviet Union, Central Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East.

In November 2000, Iraq became the first OPEC nation to begin selling its oil for euros. Since then, the value of the euro has increased 17 per cent, and the dollar has begun to decline. One important reason for the invasion and installation of a US-dominated government in Iraq was to force the country back to the dollar. Another reason for the invasion was to dissuade further OPEC momentum towards the euro, especially from Iran—the second largest OPEC producer—which was actively discussing a switch to euros for its oil exports.

## 20. Pentagon Increases Private Military Contracts

War profiteering has risen to an all-time high under the Bush Administration. For the first time in history, one in 10 people deployed during a war was a private contractor. From building the tent cities to maintaining the fighter jets and training the troops in live-weapons fire, private companies have made a killing in the invasion of Iraq.

Staffed largely by ex-military and Defense Department officials, private companies—such as Kellogg, Brown & Root (KBR), DynCorp, Cubic, ITT and MPRI—have been aggressively snatching up government contracts.

KBR is a subsidiary of Halliburton, the energy company formerly headed by the now US Vice-President Dick Cheney. When he was Secretary of Defense for Bush, Sr, Cheney awarded Halliburton a \$3.9 million contract to "study and then implement the privatization of routine army functions". KBR was given a 10-year contract in 1992, the first under the Department of Defense's Logistics Civil Augmentation Program (LOGCAP). [Halliburton KBR was also awarded a LOGCAP III 10-year contract in December 2001. Ed.] This "cost-plus-award-fee, indefinite-delivery/indefinite-quantity service" is an open-ended mandate for privatisation anywhere in the world.

It is significant that Cheney has directly benefited from these contracts (he receives compensation of US\$180,000 a year from Halliburton) and his staff continues to receive advice from the company.

Retired Admiral Joe Lopez, former Commander-in-Chief of US Forces in southern Europe as well as Cheney's aide under the elder Bush, is now the Senior Vice-President at KBR and responsible for military contracting.

## 21. Third World Austerity Policies: Coming Soon to a City Near You

Policies traditionally carried out overseas by "international lending institutions" such as the World Bank or International Monetary Fund (IMF) are quickly becoming part of the US domestic economy. Privatisation, loss of social services, bifurcation of the economy and an overall decline in the lives of working people are an ongoing reality in the United States.

Officially, IMF and World Bank measures were imposed to curb inflation, increase exports and strengthen the fiscal condition of debtor nations, allowing them to pay back their loans. In actuality, however, the common result of structural adjustments has been depressed wages, reduced consumer purchase-power, and environmental degradation, while profit rates

for multinational investors have been boosted. Small farmers, having lost their subsidies and import protections, are driven off their land into overcrowded cities.

According to a number of economists, including the former chief economist for the World Bank, as Western investment in the Third World increased throughout the 1990s so did poverty and social instability.

## 22. Welfare Reform Up for Reauthorisation, but Still No Safety Net

In 1996, US President Bill Clinton enacted legislation that ended 61 years of federal aid designed to lift families out of poverty and ushered in a commitment to lower welfare rolls and force recipients to work. The 1996 law, entitled Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), is set to be reviewed in the summer of 2003.

Poverty and unemployment are on the rise in the US, and the welfare safety net for needy children no longer meets basic needs. Yet the Bush Administration is seeking to reduce the safety net even more.

The euro has begun to emerge as a serious threat to dollar hegemony and US economic dominance.

### 23. Argentina Crisis Sparks Cooperative Growth

The citizens of Argentina are cooperatively rebuilding their country, rising above the financial devastation caused by decades of privatisation and military leadership.

By December 2001 the International Monetary Fund recipe had gone sour, destroying currency values and employment levels. The IMF "recipe" had used loans to prop up an overvalued peso as well as push the multinational privatisation of Argentinian companies. The resulting crisis left thousands of people unemployed. Fearing a run on the banks, the government froze accounts, enraging a public that was already nervous about losing their life savings. Millions took to the streets throughout the country.

The President resigned and, within a month, Argentina had defaulted on US\$132 billion of foreign debt and was suffering a 25 per cent unemployment rate, a middle class rapidly slipping into poverty, widespread hunger and mounting crime. What had once been the world's seventh richest nation found itself in complete economic, political and social collapse.

Alva Sotelo was a seamstress at a Brukman factory in Buenos Aires, where, like many other debt-burdened factories, the owners cut their losses and abandoned the plant. With the idea of survival fuelling the factory's "former" employees, they began sleeping in the factory, hoping their employers would come back and pay their wages. Eventually, the workers at Brukman and hundreds of other previously employed factory workers, having no other alternative, began slowly to run the factory themselves. The workers at Brukman elected a six-member commission to coordinate the work; they managed to pay off the debts with factory profits and pay workers an equal amount by dividing the remaining profits.

The middle and lower classes have joined in a grassroots movement to take back the country. The power vacuum is being filled by an array of grassroots democratic organisations. *Asambleas populares* (popular assemblies) are occurring all over the country, including in over 200 neighbourhoods in Buenos Aires alone. These assemblies consist of people gathering in parks or plazas to address problems facing their communities: food distribution, health care, day care, welfare and transportation. "The spirit on the streets and in the assemblies is that people can govern themselves," notes *[SIC] Magazine*.

According to one poll, one third of Argentinians have attended a popular assembly, and "35 per cent say the assemblies constitute 'a new form of political organization'". Many people have even disengaged themselves from the formal peso economy by joining "barter clubs"—neighbourhood-based economic networks, often with their own currency, that let citizens trade goods and services without dealing with the banks. The barter system now accounts for US\$400 to \$600 million worth of business.

The spirit of the cooperative is alive and well in cities, rural areas and neighbourhoods all over Argentina. Neighbourhood assemblies have organised alternative forms of survival such as street-corner soup kitchens. Food donations are now replacing money as the price of entrance to cultural events. Community gardens are prospering.

The most extraordinary of these new forms of survival are worker cooperatives like the Brukman factory. There are about

**There are about 100 legal, worker-owned cooperatives in Argentina, which range in size from eight employees to over a thousand. Roughly 10 businesses a month are being taken over and run by the employees.**

100 legal, worker-owned cooperatives in Argentina, which range in size from eight employees to over a thousand. Roughly 10 businesses a month are being taken over and run by the employees. Most of them share a model similar to Brukman's, where the workers elect the managers of the company and the profits are split among the workers. The original owners often attempt to evict workers, but are unsuccessful either because they are legally challenged or because members of the local neighbourhood assemblies show up and hold nonviolent protests and vigils against the eviction of the workers.

### 24. US Aid to Israel Fuels Repressive Occupation in Palestine

US aid to Israel over the course of its 54 years of nationhood has fuelled the illegal occupation of Palestinian land, superseding Palestinian rights to self-government.

During the last 25 years, US aid to Israel has comprised about 60 per cent military aid and 40 per cent economic aid. There is a new plan to phase out all economic aid by 2008 in order to have *all* the aid going to the military. Israel receives about US\$3 billion a year in direct aid and \$3 billion a year in indirect aid in the form of special loans and grants. It is with this aid that Israel has been able to continue the comprehensive and unrelenting occupation of the West Bank and Gaza.

Today, Israel is bulldozing Palestinian farmers' olive trees in order to build an encompassing 30-foot-high cement wall with gun towers and electric fencing to imprison Palestinians and the entire West Bank. Israeli forces have commandeered the Western Aquifer (which constitutes 50 per cent

of the West Bank's water supply) and thousands of acres of Palestinian agricultural land. Since Israel barred most Palestinians from working inside Israel, unemployment in the West Bank has soared to over 50 per cent. Agriculture is therefore more important than ever.

Square foot by square foot, olive tree by olive tree, village by village, Israel is relentlessly taking over Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza with the full support of the American taxpayer.

### 25. Convicted Corporations Receive Perks Instead of Punishment

American energy giant Enron and telecommunications company WorldCom committed massive corporate fraud and illegal acts. Declaring bankruptcy in December 2001, they left thousands of American workers jobless and without pensions.

The Institute for Policy Studies in Washington, DC, and Corpwatch, a multinational watchdog group, have uncovered evidence of bribery scandals, environmental degradation and violations of international and labour laws.

Yet Enron still has a 25 per cent interest in a Bolivian oil company called Transredes. Working with Shell Oil, the company is building a pipeline through Bolivia's Chaco Forest region—an area internationally known for its biodiversity, endangered species and as the ancestral homeland of the indigenous Guarani and Guianek peoples. In December 2002, Transredes was granted US\$220 million in loans from the International Development Bank, to be backed by US taxpayer dollars.